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Russia still silent over lecturer

By our Diplomatic Staff

There had been no official reaction in Moscow last night to the British Consul's request to see Mr Gerald Brooke, the London lecturer being held for "alleged involvement in subversive activities."

Mrs Barbara Brooke, informed the Consul immediately after her husband had been detained on Monday while the couple were visiting the flat of a Soviet citizen. But it was two days before the British Embassy received any reply to inquiries about the case. The Soviet Foreign Ministry then said that a criminal charge had been preferred against Mr Brooke for "alleged involvement in subversive activities," but refused to give any details.

The British Embassy in Moscow, in a statement, said that yesterday the Russian Foreign Ministry had informed it that the question of a meeting between HM Consul and Mr Brooke would be considered by the "competent Soviet organs at the appropriate stage of the investigation of the criminal charge." These facts had been reported to the Foreign Office.

The Foreign Office said in London yesterday that it had no knowledge of any subversive activities in which Mr Brooke might be involved. Previous experience suggests that it will be days, and possibly weeks,

before the Soviet Government makes any official statement.

Meanwhile Mrs Brooke is staying with the Consul, Miss Agnes Wood, and is expected to apply for an extension of her visitor's visa.

Yesterday, at a press conference at Miss Wood's home she described how she was questioned all Sunday night by security police. She said she and her husband were with a party of British teachers.

"We were in a flat with some Russians when three plainclothesmen came in and took us away." Pale and speaking almost inaudibly Mrs Brooke said she had been told nothing of the nature of the charges against her husband.

She had been taken to a building and kept in a room until 7.30 a.m. when she was released. She had not slept: "They questioned me all night," she said, but she had been treated courteously and no force had been used.

She avoided a question about whether she and her husband were acquainted with the Russians in whose apartment they were arrested. Turning her face away, and beginning to lose control of herself, she said she had asked to see her husband.

"They told me they will consider the question early in May," Mrs Brooke said it was her first visit to Russia.

Mrs Brooke said she did not know whether any of the Russians had also been arrested.

Private visit

Mr Brooke, who is 26, runs a one-year Russian course for modern language teachers at the Holborn College of Law, Languages, and Commerce. The party of 12 teachers, with whom he was on a 12-day visit to Moscow, is due home on Sunday. The visit is believed to have been organised privately by Mr Brooke.